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The Merry Widow Hat

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The Merry Widow Hat

A Farce in One Act

For Female Characters Only

By
HELEN SHERMAN GRIFFITH

Author of "A Man's Voice," "The Wrong Package," "The Scarlet Bonnet," "The Wrong Miss Mather," "Maid to Order," "The Dumb Waiter," "A Large Order," "A Psychological Moment," etc.

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
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CHARACTERS

MRS. JULIA SIMS, *school principal.*
MABEL GARTH, ETHEL NOBLE } *pupils.*
NANCY NOBLE, *a country cousin.*
MARY ANN NICKERSON, *a country girl looking for a place.*

COSTUMES:—Modern.

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The Merry Widow Hat

SCENE.—*The waiting-room of a railway station. Benches in double rows. Large maps and time-tables hung on the walls. Booths at one side labeled "Tickets," "Pullman tickets," "Telegraph station," "Telephone," etc. On* L. *side, exit to trains; on* R., *exit to "Women's Waiting-room," and back, exit to street. Have some one behind scenes call trains now and then, and as many supernumeraries as possible to move in and out as travelers.*

Enter MABEL GARTH *and* ETHEL NOBLE, *back, dressed as schoolgirls and wearing the broad sailor hats once in vogue, known as "Merry Widows." They look about them apprehensively as if afraid of being seen.*

MAB. (*anxiously*). Oh, Ethel, do you think we are quite safe?

ETH. (*coolly*). Not a bit. We may be discovered any moment. That is part of the excitement.

MAB. Oh, why couldn't you have told Mrs. Sims the truth, instead of inventing an imaginary trip to the dentist?

ETH. My trip to the dentist is far from imaginary. I have to go there before we go back to school and let him probe about where that filling came out, to tell me how long I dare put off my next appointment. And you know perfectly well why I could not tell Mrs. Sims the truth. If I had said that a country cousin was passing through town with an hour or two to wait, she would have let me come down to meet her, no doubt, but she would have sent a teacher with us and we should have sat primly on one of these benches (*pointing to them*) talking about the weather and praising our noble preceptors! What I propose is to give my young cousin a rousing, jolly hour.

MAB. Is she nice?

ETH. I've never met her. As she comes from the country

she is no doubt raw-boned, queerly dressed and green as grass. It will be such fun to take her out to see the sights. And we'll have a feast, too. I have my whole week's allowance here.

(*Pats shopping bag.*)

MAB. But if you have never seen her, how will you recognize her?

ETH. Oh, guesswork. Not many people will get off the train from such a small town as Spring Village, and then she'll be on the lookout for me, too. I told her she would know me by my "merry widow." (*She straightens her hat.*)

MAB. (*straightening her hat*). But nearly everybody wears a "merry widow" nowadays.

ETH. (*carelessly*). Oh, well, we'll surely find her. (*Looks at her watch.*) The train isn't due for several minutes. Come on, let's run across to the drug store and get an ice-cream soda. I'll buy some chocolate fudge, too.

(*She moves toward door, back.*)

MAB. (*following*). Oh, dear, I feel it in my bones that we are going to be caught! [*Exeunt* MAB. *and* ETH., *back.*

Enter MARY ANN NICKERSON, L. *side, from train shed, carrying cheap suit case marked "N. N." She pauses* C. *and looks around, somewhat bewildered.*

MARY. Dear, dear, what is a body expected to do? Where shall I go? (*She reads the signs over doors.*) Telegrams, telephones. Lawsy me, I only wish I knew somebody to telephone to! (*She sits on front bench and makes believe telephone, in drawling, affected voice.*) Hello, hello, central. Give me 1909–A. Right. Hello, is this Mr. Moneybags' house? Well, I just wanted to let you know I am in town. Please send down the sixty horse-power auto—the green one with red cushions—and give me a ride to do the town. I'm waiting right here. An' you can call for my trunks later. Only three. Good-bye. (*To audience; rising.*) That's the way ma's summer boarders talk. Oh, I may be from the country but I know a thing or two. I don't think it's ghosts when a phonograph goes off, or ask what's become of the horses when I see an automobile coming. But what'll I do now? I declare, I'm plum beat out, what with argufying with pa to let me come to the city to get a place, and workin' over-time with ma to keep

her amiable. (*Reads signs again.*) "Women's Waiting-room." Hum, I should say that was the place for me. I'm a woman and I know how to wait at table, thanks to the summer boarders. Guess I'll apply for the position.

[*Exit* MARY, R. *side, carrying suit case.*

Enter MRS. JULIA SIMS, *back. She is dressed in black and wears a widow's veil. She carries an open note in her hand.*

MRS. S. (*consulting note*). How very thoughtful of Mrs. Marmon. She writes that the daughter of the woman she boarded with last summer is coming to town to-day to look for work and thinks she might suit me at the school. (*Reads.*) "Mary Ann is a quiet, industrious, hard-working girl. Indeed, she is treated as a mere drudge at home and I am sure could not complain of too hard work in any household. I don't know how to tell you how to reach her except that I understood she is to apply at several Intelligence Offices. Her name is Mary Ann Nickerson, and it might be worth your while to look her up at one of them. I am sorry to be so vague in my information, but only just heard about her plans and as she is to go on the 10th——" (*Speaks.*) The 10th, that's to-day. (*Reads.*) "I had not time to write to Mary Ann, or I should have given her your address and sent her direct to you." (*Speaks, folding letter.*) As Mary Ann could not be sent to me, I have come to seek Mary Ann. (*Looks at watch.*) Bless me, the train is past due! I wonder why the people are not coming off? I suppose there are very few passengers on this little branch railroad. Or maybe the train is late. I shall ask. [*Exit* MRS. S., *door* L. *Slight pause.*

Enter NANCY NOBLE, *door* L. *She is quietly and simply but very becomingly dressed and carries small satchel.*

NAN. (*looking around in some perplexity*). It is odd that Ethel is not here to meet me. She wrote that she surely would be here and I have been waiting on the platform all this time. (*Scrutinizes supernumeraries seated on different benches or moving in and out.*) Ethel wrote me that I should know her by the merry widow. I suppose that was her funny way of describing her chaperon. But I don't see any one who looks like a widow, either merry or sad. I suppose I shall just have to wait for my train by myself.

(*She seats herself in a corner of front bench, takes book from bag and reads.*)

Enter MRS. S., L.

MRS. S. I was too late after all. The gateman tells me the train has been in some time. Well, I shall have to make a round of the Intelligence Offices. Let me see which one is the nearest.

(MRS. S. *seats herself on other end of front bench, takes a memorandum book out of her shopping bag and bends over it, frowning and studying its pages.*)

NAN. (*aside, looking up from her book*). Why, there is a widow—not very "merry" from appearances, but perhaps she is anxious at having missed me. I wonder where Ethel is?

MRS. S. (*consulting book*). Mrs. Smith's office is the best known. No doubt she will go there first. I'll try it, at any rate.

(MRS. S. *puts note-book back in shopping bag and rises.*)

NAN. (*shyly, closing book and approaching* MRS. S.). I beg pardon, but were you looking for me?

MRS. S. (*surveying her with surprise*). Are you the girl from Spring Village? (*Aside.*) It is she I passed on the platform just now, but I never should have taken her for a maid looking for work.

NAN. (*simply*). Yes, I am from Spring Village. The train got in about ten minutes ago. I had expected my cousin to meet me.

MRS. S. (*aside*). I did not know she had relatives in town. I hope they won't begin putting notions into her head about higher wages and less work. (*Aloud.*) Indeed?

NAN. (*aside*). How coldly she speaks. I wonder if Ethel is being punished for some mischief by being forbidden to come. (*Aloud.*) But I was told to be on the lookout for a mer—for some one dressed in black, ma'am. The letter said ——

MRS. S. (*in a relieved tone*). Oh, you got a letter after all? Then it is all right. (*Aside.*) How kind of Mrs. Marmon to have written on the chance of catching her. She has a nice face and neat appearance. (*To* NAN.) Come this way, please.

(*Moves toward door, back.*)

NAN. (*surprised*). Are you going to take me to the school?

MRS. S. (*in businesslike tones*). Yes, at once. Unless there is something you must attend to first.

(*They talk aside,* MRS. S. *with her back to rear entrance, standing between* NAN. *and door.*)

Enter MAB. *and* ETH, *back, carrying large candy box and other packages. They stop short, clutch each other, and gasp as they catch sight of* MRS. S.

MAB. (*groaning, aside to* ETH.). We are discovered! She has come after us!

ETH. (*impatiently, aside to* MAB.). No, she hasn't. She hasn't even seen us. She is talking to some one. We must fly, Mabel!

MAB. (*aside to* ETH.). Let's make a thirty-yard dash back to the drug store. (*Turns toward door.*)

ETH. Yes, let's. We can watch from there and see when she goes.

(*Exeunt* MAB. *and* ETH., *carrying packages, on tiptoe, back.*)

MRS. S. (*to* NAN.). Very well, we will go directly to the school. I have a cab waiting outside. This way, please.

(*Exit* MRS. S. *back, followed by* NAN., *carrying her bag.*)

Enter MARY, R., *carrying her suit case.*

MARY. Well, the city is a queerer place than I thought it would be! I asked a woman in there if she wanted to engage a waitress—she had on an apron so I supposed she was head waitress or something—an' she just stared at me. "This ain't the restaurant," she ses real sharp like. "You take the elevator up to the next floor for that." Just then a young lady with a torn skirt braid comes up and asks for a needle an' thread, an' I couldn't get another word out of either of them. I guess I'll rest me a bit and then ask advice of a policeman how to find one of them Intelligence Offices the boarders are always talking about.

(*She wanders about room, glances at supernumeraries, smiles at one or two in a friendly way, but they stare at her coldly or move away. She turns to the wall and reads large time-table.*)

Enter MAB. *and* ETH., *back, still carrying parcels. They peer about cautiously.*

ETH. (*catching sight of* MARY *reading time-table*). There she is!

MAB. (*stifling a scream*). Where? Oh, where? Oh, we shall be expelled for this!

(*Supers on benches turn and stare, curiously.*)

ETH. Shsh! Be quiet! You are making people look at us! I don't mean Mrs. Sims, stupid, I mean Nancy.

MAB. (*in great relief*). Oh! Well, why didn't you say so? You gave me an awful scare. Which is she?

(*She looks at people on benches.*)

ETH. (*pointing to* MARY). There she is, reading the time-table. (*Sighs.*) That must be she!

MAB. Oh, Ethel!

ETH. (*dryly*). It's something of a blow, isn't it?

MAB. (*surveying the unconscious* MARY). She *is* countrified, there's no doubt about that.

ETH. (*with dignity*). What can you expect when one has lived in a small country village *all* one's life?

MAB. (*watching* MARY). Ethel, are you *sure* it is she? Isn't there some mistake?

ETH. (*sadly, shaking her head*). There can't be. Don't you see that she is carrying a bag marked "N. N., Spring Village"?

MAB. (*regretfully*). I'm afraid you're right. "Nancy Noble, Spring Village." Yes, there can't be any doubt. Aren't you going to speak to her?

ETH. (*sadly*). I suppose I shall have to. What shall I say?

MAB. Ask her—ah—hum—ask her if she is going to stay very long?

ETH. (*crossly*). But I know she's not. She's just passing through. (*Sighs.*) I'll just have to talk and act as if everything were all right. Come on, Mabel, help me through with it. (*They advance front, carrying parcels.* ETH., *with great warmth of manner, holds out her hand.*) How do you do? I am sorry we are late.

MAB. (*heartily*). We were on time, but had to dodge Mrs. Sims.

MARY (*in great surprise*). But ——

ETH. Mrs. Sims is our principal, you know. I thought it would be more of a lark if we came by ourselves.

MARY (*in greater bewilderment*). But ——

MAB. Your mother wrote Ethel that she hoped she would do something for you here in town, and we thought we'd give you a real good time.

MARY (*aside, in relieved voice*). Oh, ma wrote, did she? Well, then, I guess likely they're the daughters of some of the summer boarders. It is real sweet of them to come. Mebbe they can tell me about finding a place.

ETH. (*looking around*). Here is an empty bench. Let's sit down and have something to eat. Aren't you hungry, Nancy?

(*They seat themselves in a row on front bench.*)

MAB. I know I'm hungry—nearly starved! But a boarding-school girl nearly always is—for good things. Were you ever at boarding-school, Nancy? You don't mind my calling you Nancy, do you? Ethel and I are such chums.

MARY (*giggling*). It's ma's name, but I don't mind. It makes a real nice pet name, don't it?

ETH. (*surprised, aside to* MAB.). I did not know that Aunt Anne was ever called Nancy. (*They settle themselves on bench and proceed to open the packages.* MARY *is still surprised and puzzled, but is prepared to have a good time.* ETH. *grows more surprised and almost indignant as* MARY'S *manners become more free and easy.* MAB. *is amused and inclined to draw* MARY *out.* ETH. *politely opens package.*) We thought possibly you might be really hungry after your journey, so we bought some sandwiches to begin with. (*She passes package and all three take sandwich.* MARY *bites into hers with relish and then stops, making a wry face.* ETH. *eats sandwich.*) Why, Nancy, what is the matter?

MARY (*gesticulating wildly*). Don't eat it, oh, don't! It's poisoned!

MAB. (*tasting her sandwich*). Poisoned! Why, it tastes all right; and we bought them at a perfectly reliable place.

MARY (*making wry face*). Taste all right? Ugh! (*Shudders; then opens her sandwich and examines contents.*) Why, what in the world is it?

(ETH. *and* MAB. *giggle.*)

ETH. Why, it's caviar, Nancy.

MARY. Caviar? Cavy-r. (*Shakes her head.*) I never heard of it. (*She takes a morsel of the caviar on her finger-tip and tastes it gingerly.*) Hum! (*Makes grimace.*) I guess I know what it is; it's sardine eggs put up in bad oil. I should think the pure food people would get after the people as puts them up. (*Confidentially.*) They are awfully particular, you know, those pure food people. Ma used a certain kind of canned peas all one summer; they were mighty cheap, and fine for the money. Why, you could hardly tell 'em from fresh peas. Several people told ma so. But the next summer, when ma went to buy some more they said at the store that they couldn't sell 'em any longer; the pure food people had been around. An' some California cherries that ma ——

ETH. (*hastily*). Here are some fresh cherries. Perhaps you will like some of these?

(*Or candied cherries if fresh fruit is not in season.*)

MAB. (*giggling and offering another box*). Or maybe you'd prefer a peppermint, to take the taste out?

MARY (*smacking her lips*). Seems as if I do still taste that bad oil.

(*Takes peppermint and eats it, first taking a cautious bite.*)

ETH. (*prying cork out of olive bottle with a hat-pin and spearing up an olive*). Have one, Nancy?

MARY (*making wry face again over olive*). What queer sort of pickles you have here in the city. I think I like the candy best.

(*Helps herself out of large box.*)

ETH. (*aside to* MAB., *trying to suppress her tears*). I never dreamed that country cousins could be so—so trying! Aunt Anne had charming manners when she visited us.

MAB. (*aside, comfortingly*). Never mind, girlie. She isn't so *very* bad. And we are having a good time.

ETH. (*aside, wiping her eyes*). Maybe you are having a good time, and *she* certainly seems to be enjoying herself (*glancing at* MARY, *who is eating candy rapidly and shaking the box to bring different kinds to light*), but *I'm* not. I am thankful that a teacher did not come too. Mabel (*solemnly*), promise me faithfully on your word of honor, never to tell!

MAB. (*aside, earnestly*). Oh, I won't indeed, only do let her talk some more, Ethel. I'm sure she was going to tell a very amusing story about ma and the cherries.

ETH. (*aside, beginning to weep again*). Oh, Mabel, if you knew how it hurts when she says "ma." If you could see Aunt Anne, so sweet and dignified and white-haired. I don't see how my mother's sister could have such a daughter!

MARY (*looking up from candy box and pointing to a package still unopened*). Say, girls, what's in there? (*Shakes candy box again and looks over its contents.*) I guess I've eat up all my favorites. (*Lays box down on bench.*)

ETH. (*wearily, taking up package*). It is a cake, but it will have to be cut before we can eat it.

MARY. Oh, I don't know. Can't we break off hunks of it?

MAB. (*hastily, trying to keep back laughter*). Let's go into the other waiting-room. There is a table in there and perhaps the matron will lend us a knife. (*She rises.*)

ETH. (*quickly, rising too*). Yes, let's go. People won't stare so—I mean, there won't be so many people in there.

MARY (*amiably*). All right, if you say so, but it's pretty comfortable here. (*She stretches herself and rises.* ETH. *shudders.* MAB. *giggles.*) Do you think the woman will let us eat in there? She told me a while ago that it wasn't a restaurant.

MAB. (*seeing that* ETH. *is almost in tears and standing between her and* MARY). She won't mind, I'm sure. She's quite a friend to us schoolgirls. We often smuggle things in there to eat. We will give her a piece of the cake and she'll be all right.

(*Exeunt three girls, right side, carrying packages,* MAB. *leading* MARY *by the arm and* ETH. *following, weeping.*)

Enter MRS. S. *and* NAN., *back.*

MRS. S. (*in distress*). My dear child, however could I have made such a mistake? I owe you a thousand apologies! What can I do to make it up to you?

NAN. (*smiling*). Oh, Mrs. Sims, please don't feel so badly about it. It was a very natural mistake. The coincidence of my coming from Spring Village explains it all.

(ETH. *and* MAB. *appear in door,* R. *They see* MRS. S. *and* NAN. *and dodge back out of sight.*)

MRS. S. But I don't understand about Ethel. You say you wrote her, asking her to meet you here?

NAN. Yes, and she answered saying that she would.

MRS. S. It's odd. She asked permission to go to the dentist this afternoon—and Mabel Garth went with her—but she said nothing about going to the station.

(*She puts hand to her forehead as if thinking deeply.* ETH. *and* MAB. *reappear in doorway again.*)

ETH. (*softly, aside to* MAB.). Who is Mrs. Sims talking to? I wish she would turn so that I could see her face.

MAB. (*softly, aside to* ETH.). She looks like a pretty girl; much more like I fancied your cousin would look.

ETH. (*softly, aside to* MAB.). Mabel, I feel sure we have made a mistake. That girl in there (*pointing over her shoulder*) *can't* be my cousin! I wonder ——

MAB. (*in alarm as* MRS. S. *moves*). Look out, she'll see us!

(ETH. *and* MAB. *disappear* R. *as* MRS. S. *turns head.*)

MRS. S. (*to* NAN.). Please excuse me a moment, my dear. I'll telephone to the dentist.

(*Exit* MRS. S. *into telephone booth.* MAB. *and* ETH. *reappear in doorway.*)

ETH. (*aside*). Mabel, do you know, I have an idea that that girl is Nancy. There is a family resemblance in the back of her head. I am going to speak to her.

MAB. (*in alarm*). But not now! Mrs. Sims is in the telephone booth, and she will see you!

(MAB. *and* ETH. *talk aside in doorway.*)

NAN. (*soliloquizing*). What can have become of Ethel, I wonder? She surely got my letter because she answered it, and promised me a rattling good time. I suppose that is why she did not tell Mrs. Sims I was coming. And yet, in that case, how can I account for the part about the widow? Certainly she meant Mrs. Sims—or some other teacher.

(*She takes letter out of her bag and opens it.*)

ETH. (*excitedly, aside to* MAB.). That's my letter!

(*They watch and listen.*)

NAN. (*reading*). "I don't believe we shall have trouble recognizing each other, even if we have never met. I dare say I'll know you from your likeness to Aunt Anne and as for me, well, you'll know me by the merry widow." (*Speaks.*) There it is in black and white. I can't understand where Ethel can have gone.

Reënter MRS. S. *from telephone booth looking worried.* ETH. *and* MAB. *dodge out of sight,* R.

MRS. S. (*anxiously*). The dentist says that Ethel has not been there this afternoon. I am beginning to feel concerned about her.

NAN. It is strange. I know she surely intended to come. You see she wrote me. (*She holds out letter.*)

MRS. S. What did she say? (*Starts to take letter.*)

NAN. (*remembering and drawing back letter in confusion*). Oh, she just says she will be here with a chaperon.

MRS. S. (*in surprise*). With a chaperon? And I was not consulted! I am afraid I must insist upon seeing that letter.

NAN. (*in distress, yielding letter*). Oh, Mrs. Sims, I am sure Ethel did not mean any disrespect to you!

MRS. S. (*reading to herself, as* NAN. *speaks and the last phrase aloud*). You will know me by the merry widow. (*Laughs.*) Oh, my dear child, is that what led you to think of a chaperon? (*Laughs heartily.*)

NAN. (*surprised and embarrassed*). Why yes, Mrs. Sims.

MRS. S. (*amused*). Then I must explain. The term "merry widow" is a vulgar name for a fashionable hat of the day. Now we must find out what has become of Ethel.

(*They sit on bench and think,* MRS. S. *studying* ETH.'S *letter.* ETH. *and* MAB. *reappear in doorway,* R.)

ETH. (*in dismay; aside to* MAB.). I heard my name. They are talking about me!

MAB. (*cautiously; aside to* ETH.). Mrs. Sims mustn't catch us now! Come back, Ethel, while we think up a plan.

(*Pulls her sleeve.*)

(*Exeunt* MAB. *and* ETH., R. *side.* ETH. *reappears alone and watches* MRS. S. *and* NAN.)

NAN. Oh, Mrs. Sims, I have just had an idea. Perhaps

Ethel has made the same mistake that you did, only the other way on. Perhaps she has mistaken Mary Ann Nickerson for me!

(*They both laugh.*)

ETH. (*angrily, aside*). Oh, they think it a laughing matter, do they? I suppose Mrs. Sims will tell this joke to the whole school. [*Exit* ETH., *angrily*, R.

MRS. S. I am convinced that that is exactly what has occurred, and Ethel is no doubt giving her a "jolly good time" somewhere.

NAN. Mary Ann got off the train quite a minute ahead of me and—I remember noticing it at the station at home—she carried her mother's bag, marked "N. N." How can we find Ethel?

MRS. S. (*rising*). We'll ask the gateman. He may be able to tell us in what direction they went. Come.

[*Exeunt* MRS. S. *and* NAN., L.

Enter MAB. *and* ETH., R., MAB. *trying to control her laughter*, ETH. *angry and distressed.*

ETH. What in the world shall we do, Mabel? For goodness' sake stop that silly giggling and suggest something!

MAB. (*going off into paroxysm of laughter*). "Ma and the canned peas!" And oh, Ethel, if you could have seen your face when she asked you how she should go about finding a place!

ETH. (*with dignity*). Of course I knew then that she could not be my cousin. But (*walking about restlessly and then stopping as she sees the supernumeraries stare curiously*) the question is now, what shall we *do?*

MAB. (*cheerfully*). Bid her a fond adieu and skip back to the school as fast as ever we can. Oh, here she comes now!

Enter MARY, R.

MARY (*reproachfully*). Say, girls, what's become of that good time you promised me? I've eat all the cake an' candy. Let's go out and see a moving picture show somewhere.

(*She starts to embrace* ETH., *who draws back indignantly.*)

ETH. (*coldly*). Nancy—I mean—er—ah—well, we might as well tell you candidly that there has been a mistake made——

MARY (*astonished*). A mistake? What do you mean?

MAB. A case of mistaken identity, you know.

MARY (*puzzled and looking at each in turn*). A case of what? Ma generally buys things by the case—for the boarders. What is that thing you said? Is it a vegetable or a breakfast food?

(MAB. *goes off into a fit of laughter.*)

ETH. (*a little crossly*). She means that we have mistaken you for some one else.

MARY (*surprised but amused*). You and her (*pointing to* MAB.) mistook me for some one else? Well! (*Laughs.*) Now, whoever heard tell of that! Ha! ha! ha! You came here to meet somebody else—an' give 'em a good time—instead o' me? (ETH. *nods.*) An' all those good things was meant for somebody else! Oh, for the land's sake!

(MARY *gives way to uncontrollable laughter.*)

MAB. (*aside to* ETH.). Come on, now, Ethel, let's slip away.

ETH. (*aside to* MAB.). But I want to see Nancy.

MAB. (*in alarm*). But you can't! She's with Mrs. Sims!

MARY (*recovering her breath*). Well, I had a good lunch anyhow, all except them sardine eggs. And (*laughing again*) maybe they was intended for a joke. (*Sentimentally.*) An' here I was, thinking that you girls belonged to some of ma's grateful boarders an' had come here to help me make my way in a great city! (*Practically.*) Say, don't either of your mas need a cook or a waitress or a chambermaid? I'm real handy.

MAB. (*nervously, pulling* ETH. *by the sleeve*). No, no, I don't think so. We must go now.

ETH. (*haughtily*). There are plenty of Intelligence Offices. Any policeman can direct you.

MARY (*hurt*). Oh, indeed? Aren't we getting hoity toity? Quite proud an' distant! (*Mimics* ETH.'s *manner.*) Any policeman can direct you. (*Aside, strutting up and down.*) The haughty Lady Imergene! (*To* ETH., *sarcastically.*) Thank you, miss. An' maybe you'll give me a reference to take to the office, miss?

MRS. S. (*entering unexpectedly,* L., *followed by* NAN.). A reference? Ethel, how do you happen to be in a position to give servants references?

MAB. (*aside, starting in dismay*). Mrs. Sims! Now we are in for it!

NAN. (*eagerly, advancing*). Oh, Ethel, then you really did come, after all!

(ETH. *and* NAN. *embrace and talk aside.*)

MARY (*amused, to* MAB.). Is it her you thought was me? (*Laughs.*)

MRS. S. (*coldly, to* MAB.). May I ask for some explanation of this affair?

(MRS. S. *and* MAB. *talk aside,* MAB. *meek and deprecating,* MRS. S. *stern, but turning away now and then to conceal a smile.*)

MARY (*to* NAN.). Oh, I say, Miss Noble, I got a joke on you, I have. These young ladies here mistook me for you. Oh, la! An' I eat up all the cake an' candy they meant for you—after they'd played a sort of April fool joke on me first.

MRS. S. (*coming forward, to* ETH. and MAB.). Girls, I think you have been punished enough for your folly—or stupidity I should prefer to call it. Firstly by putting yourselves in an embarrassing position, and secondly by missing a pleasant hour with a charming young companion.

(*She smiles at* NAN.)

NAN. (*pleased, but embarrassed by the compliment*). Oh, thank you, Mrs. Sims.

MRS. S. May I point a little moral?

MAB. }
ETH. } Oh, please do, Mrs. Sims. We deserve worse!

MAB. (*aside, to* ETH.). And we'll get it, never fear, when we get back to school.

ETH. (*aside, to* MAB., *groaning*). Writing out French verbs, and no dessert for a week, I suppose.

MRS. S. (*quietly*). My moral is double pointed. Never jump at conclusions and (*holding out* ETH.'s *letter*) do not use slang.

(ETH. *and* MAB. *look confused, and consciously adjust their hats.*)

MARY (*to* MRS. S.). Please, mem, don't you need a servant? I like your looks.

MRS. S. (*trying not to smile*). I do, Mary Ann. That, in fact, was my errand here at the station. To meet you. (ETH. *and* MAB. *stare at each other.*) If you are willing to come I'll engage you and we can settle the business later.

MARY (*suspiciously, remembering the caviar*). I won't have to—to eat queer things, will I?

MRS. S. (*surprised*). I hope not!

MARY. All right, then, I'll come. Miss Nancy, when you write to your ma, ask her to tell my ma how quickly I got suited.

(*Voice outside calls train.*)

NAN. My train! I am so sorry! Good-bye, Mrs. Sims. Thank you for your kindness. (*Embraces* ETH.) Oh, Ethel, I am so sorry and disappointed that we did not get our visit!

MRS. S. Girls, it is a very old saying, but a very true one:—Honesty is the best policy!

CURTAIN

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KNOTT INNITT, *the janitor.*
MISS TAKE, *a pretty schoolmarm.*
GUSSIE GUSH, *a giggling pupil.*
SUSY PRIM, *so ladylike.*
FAN BALL, *a national game enthusiast.*
WANTA KNOW, *who doesn't.*
SARAH SCALES, *who has her own weigh.*
CORDIE WOOD, *a dull pupil.*
LITTLE DOT, *at the foot of everything.*
FLOSSIE FRESH, *so pert.*
STILL WORSE. *and getting no better.*
LOTTA NERVE, *and uses it.*
ANNA HELD, *with stage aspirations.*
LILLIAN RUSSELL, *the girl baritone.*
IMA KIDD, *and looks it.*
TOPSY, *a brunette.*
ANNA CATHERINE, *with more to come.*
MAUDIE MUDD, *well grounded.*
HATTIE HOPP, *a lively maiden.*
ETTA LOTT, *always hungry.*
GOO GOO, *the baby.*
BELLE TOLLES, *a ringer.*
NOTSO WARM, *so cold and distant.*
LUCY LOCKIT, *up on politics.*
SALLIE SMILES, *a cheerful girl.*

SYNOPSIS.

Enter the merry school girls; gossip and giggles. Greeting to teacher. School is opened. "Good Morning, Merry Sunshine." Recitations, compositions and other exercises. The school committeeman's visit. Speech to the pupils. School "exhibition." Vocal solos. Recitation. Ending with a pretty and exciting Fire Drill.

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SYNOPSIS.

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